



A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO CHOOSING A DOCTOR: HOW TO MAKE A WISE DECISION

Selecting a doctor, whether for primary care or a specialist, is a serious decision. It is important to select someone who is a good fit for you, is properly trained and licensed, and has a good track record. A few things to consider when selecting a physician include:

1. Your insurance plan. Check your coverage for the list of preferred providers.
2. Language. It is important to communicate clearly with your physician. If English is not your preferred language, be sure the doctor or someone at the office speaks your first language.
3. Location. You may prefer that your doctor's office is located close to your home or work. Or, it may be important to you that the office is accessible by public transportation.

When selecting a new doctor, the Nevada State Health Division offers the following tips:

1. Determine the kind of doctor you are seeking. Primary care physicians, sometimes known as family practice or internal medicine doctors, manage your overall care, annual checkups and most other complaints. When it is needed, they refer their patients to specialists. In the world of physicians, there are medical doctors (MDs) and doctors of osteopathic medicine (DOs), depending on the kind of degree their medical school awarded them. The degrees are equivalent and both are legitimate. Specialists, whether MDs or DOs, limit their care to specific areas such as dermatology (skin care) or cardiology (heart health).
2. Ask people you know about their doctor, and their level of satisfaction with the doctor as well as with office support staff. Check with your friends, neighbors and coworkers. Testimonials are valuable. Make a list of the ones that seem best. Find out whether the doctor is an MD or a DO and be sure to note that on your list, too. Both MDs and DOs must be licensed, and your next step involves checking on the license.
3. If the physician is an MD, visit the Nevada Board of Medical Examiners website, www.medboard.nv.gov. Under "Patients and Consumers," click on "Look Up a Physician..." Enter the names of the physicians on your list, and you can access their contact information, the scope of their practice, where they studied and trained, and information regarding current conditions or restrictions on their license, as well as malpractice history or board actions. Even without names, this website is a valuable tool. For example, to find physicians located conveniently close to your home, you can do a search by entering just your zip code. The system will generate a list of MD physicians within that zip code, and will provide the same license information stated above. The toll-free phone number is 888-890-8210.
4. If you are researching a DO, go to www.bom.nv.gov. Under "Public Resources," click on "Licensee List" or "Licensee Verification," depending on whether you want information on a specific individual or are seeking a list of all DO licensed individuals in a given area. The toll-free phone number is 877-325-7828.
5. Having done your research, make your choice and set up an appointment. If after your first appointment you are not comfortable, it is your prerogative to make an appointment with another physician. Remember, it is worth the effort to select a doctor who is right for you. Do your research by asking friends then checking the online databases. A good doctor-patient relationship is an essential part of high-quality healthcare.